

## **Neoliberalism and the Right Symposium: Introduction**

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The four articles in this symposium were originally presented as papers at a research workshop on ‘the right and neoliberalism’ held at Queen Mary, University of London in September 2015. The impetus for the workshop was two-fold. First, to reflect on and engage with the avalanche of academic literature and commentary (Gamble 2009; Mason 2009; Crouch 2011; Roubini 2011; Mirowski 2013) that had emerged in response to the 2008 global financial crisis and, in particular, the question of the ongoing durability and resilience of the neoliberal regime of political economy across the mature capitalist democracies. Secondly, the role of the right and, notably, far-right political currents both within neoliberalism and in many of the political responses to the 2008 crisis. Writing this introduction in the wake of the decision by UK voters in June 2016 to depart from the European Union and the election of Donald Trump to the US presidency in November of the same year on a platform defined by nationalist and racist rhetoric and scapegoating reveals all too starkly the connections between neoliberalism and the right that the original workshop was concerned with exploring.

These two ‘political earthquakes’ in the liberal political imagination are, obviously, significant in themselves and have been, and will be, for some time, the subject of critical and scholarly analysis, especially given the intersections of race, class and gender in the politics of ‘Trumpism’ and ‘Brexit.’ However, it is also important to note – and this is what the articles in this symposium all recognize and comment on, in various ways – is that not only was the ‘political brew’ that produced the political outcomes of Brexit and Trump long in the making, but they also reveal what could be seen as organic or constitutive pathologies or contradictions within the political economy of neoliberalism that, in many respects dates back to the emergence of this distinct ideo-political framework in the 1930s. The articles here,

then, provide an overview of some of the longstanding connections between the politics of the right and the far-right and neoliberalism. And whilst the aim of the articles (based on the workshop papers) is not to provide an informed political response or diagnosis to the consequences of the 2008 crisis and the subsequent revival of the far-right across much of the advanced capitalist world, it is hoped that they provide a set of useful critical contextualizations that bring out the important connections between the forces of the right and neoliberalism from which progressive and left-leaning political responses can build on.

What we intend to do in the rest of the introduction is to outline some of the key arguments within each of the four articles before moving onto a preliminary assessment of the political topography across the Anglosphere in particular with respect to the relationship between the right and neoliberalism. In doing so we will offer some, necessarily, impressionistic remarks as to how far the ideological-political and social forces of a recombined right/far-right axis are now ‘over-determining’ of neoliberalism, suggesting a radical break with the neoliberal regime inaugurated in the early 1980s.

Each of the four articles focuses on distinct dimensions of the relationship between the right and neoliberalism and all of them are broadly framed within or sympathetic to Marxist-informed critique and commentary to varying degrees. Werner Bonefeld’s ‘Authoritarian Liberalism: From Schmitt via Ordoliberalism to the Euro’ offers a precise and meticulous overview of the political economy of neoliberalism with an emphasis on the *political* and the role and nature of the state in the architecture of neoliberalism. Focusing specifically on the ‘ordo-liberal’ foundational strand (Ropke 1998; see also Bonefeld 2017) of neoliberalism that emerged in the 1930s in response to what these writers saw as the mutual ‘collectivist threats’ of Bolshevism and National Socialism, Bonefeld provides a political critique and historical sociology of the key ideas that informed neoliberalism as a strategy in response to crisis. The significance of this is these writers were explicit in making

political interventions even whilst they claimed to provide generic and ontological claims about the relationship between the state and market exchange. This tension – between the ontological and contingent or temporal dimensions of neoliberal theory – is also commented on in Ray Kiely's contribution, specifically the tension between what could be seen as a 'utopian' vision of market order based on the spontaneous and de-centred 'anarchic' aspects of individualized market exchange and the insistence across all strands of neoliberalism for state agency to plan and construct the social and ideological foundations for a neoliberal market order.

Bonefeld, then, brings out the clear political and, implicitly, (bourgeois) class dimensions of neoliberalism through the way in which the ordo-liberals advocated a distinct political intervention to reconfigure the relationship between state and society through a forced separation of the plurality of social interests that had 'colonised' the state in the years after World War One. Directed specifically at the context of the crisis of the Weimar Republic, the ordo-liberal intervention was something that re-appeared, if re-articulated within a more 'acceptable' political register in Europe and specifically Britain in the 1970s. It is through this insistence on 'cleansing the state' from the consequences of (social) democracy that neoliberalism's authoritarian impulse can be seen as foundational to it. Bonefeld, then, like Kiely, demolishes the sloppy and misconceived if popular presentation of neoliberalism as 'anti-state' and/or about a straightforward project to create a 'free market'. Consequently, the right – not least the political thought of Carl Schmitt and in spite of Hayek's description of him as 'Adolf Hitler's crown jurist' (Hayek, 1967: 169) – is present at neoliberalism's creation and provides an important and defining dimension of its character. The necessity, then, for neoliberalism is an authoritarian political intervention or dictatorship of one form or another. This is where the right enters the story as a necessary socio-political force to secure such a settlement. Further, as both Bonefeld and Kiely note, whilst the origins

of neoliberalism made explicit reference to a hostility to both left and right-wing forms of collectivism this did not stop Hayek and others from condoning and supporting right-wing authoritarian dictatorship as a necessary basis for the construction of a neoliberal social order.

In the context of a post-Cold War world where the threats from the radical left are diminished, it would seem that the necessity of an authoritarian and right-wing politics would not be necessary for neoliberalism. However, as Bonefeld notes, the Eurozone project reveals the continuation of a neoliberal political economy informed by the legacies of Weimar, if not quite the spirit of Carl Schmitt. In this respect, the key continuity across the very different social and geopolitical contexts is the quarantining of democratic social power from any substantive intrusion over 'market sovereignty'.

This issue of the international or geopolitical dimensions of neoliberalism is also addressed by Kiely and in the contribution from Davidson and Saull. Thus, the Eurozone project is revealed, in Bonefeld's eyes, as a quintessential neoliberal arrangement that rests on an organic and, in essence, right-wing or conservative, suspicion and hostility towards the views of the masses interfering with the consistent and transparent operation of market-rules. So whilst the Eurozone is not an example of a 'commissarial dictatorship' *a'la* Alexander Rüstow it does reflect a conscious legal-institutional arrangement to ensure what Bonefeld calls the operation of 'market police' as the fundamental basis of neoliberal political economy.

As already suggested, Ray Kiely's article, compliments and reinforces much of how Bonefeld frames the relationship between neoliberalism and the right. However, Kiely's contribution extends the analysis of neoliberal theory and its connections with the right in two ways. First, through commenting on the long-standing ambivalence within elements of liberal political thought in the nineteenth century, as reflected in the writings of John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville, (as well as prominent conservative thinkers such as Gustav Le Bon

and Ortega y Gasset) towards the development of democracy and the acquiring of political citizenship by the masses. For Kiely, these writings provide an important intellectual reservoir that foresaw the threats to a propertied and market order that democratization would present. However, Kiely goes beyond this through revealing the deeper overlaps and similarities with a number of quasi-fascist writers such as the Italian elite theorists. Here he distinguishes between the 'political' and 'economic' dimensions of liberalism and through this highlights how Schmitt's critique of the Weimer Republic as a denunciation of liberalism only stands up with respect to the political or democratic dimensions of liberalism.

Secondly, Kiely develops the analysis outlined in Bonefeld's contribution through an assessment of the so-called 'Chicago School' of neoliberalism as well as the role played by neoliberal thinking on Western policies in the Cold War across the post-colonial world. Here, Bonefeld's commentary on the neoliberal 'embrace' of the authoritarian right is related to a more systematic application of what Kiely calls the 'colonial state of exception' as a justification of the need for authoritarian responses to democratic and left-wing demands across much of the colonial world after 1945 and, with it, the justification for the continuation of colonial arrangements, most notably in the defence of white settler regimes in southern Africa. In many respects then, an important aspect of US and Western policy in the Cold War was informed by a neoliberal defence of political authoritarianism.

The dominant theme in Kiely's analysis is the concern over and hostility towards mass democracy on the operation of markets and hence the realization of freedom as understood by neoliberal intellectuals. Whilst in the context of Weimar and the third world after 1945 this was dealt with via the authoritarian state of exception involving an embrace of the right and in some cases, the fascist right; in the context of a post-Cold War era the Eurozone project reveals its animus towards democracy and hence neoliberal foundations, less in the re-emergence of dictatorship and more on a de-politicization of the economic

sphere for technocratic remedies which are equally undemocratic. Here, Kiely identifies and teases out an important analytical slippage and inconsistency within the neoliberal tradition that is particularly associated with Hayek's work with regard to his epistemological suspicions over expert knowledge. Thus, in his earlier positions and in his critique of collectivism 'of all parties' Hayek focused on the impossibility of a universal knowledge of economic relations in a centralized bureaucracy. Yet, in the case of the Eurozone and the role of the technocracy of the European Central Bank this seems to be precisely how the Eurozone is managed – via a centralized bureaucratic elite, who are, in effect, removed from any democratic scrutiny.

Kiely's insight here as to the differences and contradictions within neoliberalism regarding its pre-occupation with immunizing the market order from any mass or democratic interventions via authoritarian or technocratic means implicate the right in different ways. In the former the right is embraced as a confrere in political struggle to crush the left and emasculate if not liquidate democratic institutions through the use of force, whilst in the latter the technocratic remedies of a market police institutionalized via the ECB in effect helps trigger a nationalist-populist far-right response from within democratic-national locales.

This is a theme taken up in Davidson and Saull's contribution, 'Neoliberalism and the Far-Right: An Ambivalent Embrace'. Here, the concern focuses on the contradictions within the realization and operationalization of actually existing neoliberalism since the 1980s with a particular focus on the neoliberal Anglosphere. Thus, Davidson and Saull track the paradoxical connections between the far-right in particular and neoliberal political economy. In doing so they bring out the way in which neoliberalism has embraced the far-right and, in some cases, they can be seen as co-conspirators in the electoral ascendancy of neoliberal regimes as exemplified in the Thatcher and Reagan administrations, whilst, on the other hand, the far-right has emerged as an antagonist towards some key elements of the neoliberal order.

One way in which the far-right has become a key antagonist within contemporary politics is a result of the ideological and policy dominance of neoliberal hegemony in the sphere of economic policy. As demonstrated in the third-way articulations of neoliberalism (that Kiely also discusses with respect to the operationalization a neoliberal ‘rationality’ across the public sphere) whereby – at least up until 2008 – ‘we are all neoliberals now,’ the scope of political division and electoral competition was reduced to the so-called ‘culture wars’. And it was here, particularly, though not exclusively in the US, where a distinct far-right current has emerged to capture a significant section of democratic imaginaries. This, as Davidson and Saull argue, also implicates race and the reproduction of racialized effects and exclusions within neoliberalism, in spite of the claims of both its theorists and political cheerleaders as to its ‘colour-blind’ or ‘post-racial’ features.

It is also here where Davidson and Saull explicitly draw on post and de-colonial critiques of neoliberalism through the category of whiteness and, in particular, its connection to the emergence of a so-called ‘white working class’ (more on this below) as a key political constituency. The operationalization of neoliberalism then has provoked the far-right. It has done so through making permanent the social insecurities that are usually associated with economic crisis. Thus, in the realization of the ordo-liberal objective of cleansing the social and democratic from the state and ‘de-proletarianizing’ labour power (see Bonefeld), neoliberalism has succeeded in producing a permanent state of social insecurity and anxiety that also has marked psychological effects (which Nicola Short’s contribution takes up). In doing so it has rendered large sections of the working class and those white (and mainly male) workers formerly protected – echoing Du Bois’s ‘wages of whiteness’ as ‘left behind’ where they have been open prey to re-imagined white, racist (and imperial) imaginaries.

However, for Davidson and Saull the connections between the far-right, neoliberalism and race go further than this. Indeed, the category of the neoliberal subject is one infused with

a racialized identity and a stereotype of whiteness, understood as both the (only) deserving recipient of social welfare *because* of the subject's active realization of a neoliberal market subjectivity. Welfare dependence here is rendered racialized, i.e. it is a problem of colour because of the failings of non-white 'citizens' to properly act as neoliberal subjects. In such scenarios, this also provides a justification for authoritarian-infused social solutions be it by way of law-and-order policies and/or punitive welfare. It also suggests that the far-right provides a form of ideological suture to the social malaise produced by neoliberalism.

The other aspect where the racialized dimensions of neoliberalism have played out and provoked a far-right animus concerns immigration. Here, as reflected in the Brexit vote and election of Trump, the far-right has taken advantage of racialized fears of migration. Yet, in this respect as Davidson and Saull note, the far-right appears as an antagonist of neoliberal capital that risks undermining the existing regime of political economy. Such a position obviously deals with any suggestion that this rendering of the far-right/neoliberal embrace is a 'functionalist' one given that the far-right challenges an important neoliberal globalizing orthodoxy associated with 'flexible' labour markets, the efficient utilization of the factors of production and the driving down of labour costs and labour's 'monopolistic tendencies'. However, Davidson and Saull are clear that whilst anti-immigration positions de-stabilize the operations of neoliberalism alongside the far-right's utilization of national-centred democratic imaginaries in populist opposition to the international-institutionalist frameworks of the Eurozone (or global free trade regimes in the US case); in themselves, these reveal the limits of the far-right critique and ability to go beyond neoliberalism. Thus, whilst fetishizing the spatial or geopolitical dimensions of neoliberal political economy, the far-right – in the form of the Tea-Party and UKIP amongst others – have been willing cheerleaders for the dismantlement of the post-war social democratic welfare settlement and the wider penetration of market and 'entrepreneurial' incentives across society and the public sector. In short, then,



the far-right has, in many respects, provided an important populist and ‘democratic’ legitimization for much of the neoliberal project over the last twenty years which, obviously, questions the depth and significance of its anti-neoliberal let alone anti-capitalist pretensions.

Nicola Short’s article, ‘On the Subject of Far-Right Wing Politics’ compliments the symposium through offering an analysis of the ‘psychological determinants’ of the far-right. Here, she engages with less commonly-cited scholarly work, including Reich’s *Mass Psychology of Fascism* to outline the co-ordinates of a historical-materialist framed psychological analysis of the ‘mind-set’ and emotional triggers determining a far-right politics.

Short contextualizes more recent scholarly debates as to the psychological constitution of political subjectivity in the neoliberal era through focusing on the psychological bases of fascism and, in particular connecting the way in which a material or structural context of economic crisis is absorbed and responded to on a psychological and emotional level. This, she argues, provides the social bases of fascism, that is, the way in which economic dislocations, anxieties and grievances open up the possibilities of large numbers of people being receptive to a fascist-like politics. This is because fascist appeals to anger, grievance, emotion and violence are more psychologically pre-disposed in such socio-economic contexts.

Short’s main focus, however, is the neoliberal context and the way in which this particular regime of political economy has helped generate distinct psychological framings of the political. Here, Short emphasizes how the neoliberal period, indeed, the type of social-psychological subjects that it seeks to mould and create, has generated an increasingly narcissistic tendency across neoliberal societies as a ‘socially mandated’ consequence of the permanent insecurities and anxieties of its operations which, at the same time stigmatizes such fears and dependencies as ‘shameful’. In moments of crisis, far-right responses – which

amount to articulations of blame, resentment and anger – find a receptive psychological pre-disposition across particular class layers through the way in far-right rhetoric and aesthetics is at once reassuring and comforting regarding those who belong and what the core foundations of the social order should be, as well as offering an emotionally-charged rhetoric that is both anti-establishment and anti-elitist but without, at the same time, questioning the fundamentals of the existing social order that these particular class layers are socially and psychologically invested in.

Short's analysis is particularly timely given the discussion of the personality and psychological character of Donald Trump and many of his supporters. For Short, whilst the context of crisis and long-standing political disillusionment and dis-engagement have provided an important context for a figure like Trump to enter the political stage, because of a prevailing narcissism that combines with highly vulnerable subjects; their sense of powerlessness facilitates an identification with 'grandiose' and 'powerful figures' such as Trump. Thus, figures such as Trump,

offer a clear representation of the psychodynamics of the far-right: a strong investment in the neoliberal fantasy of market-based individual autonomy that is rhetorically hostile to establishment elites while disavowing any dependency on state support for their achievements.

This, obviously, brings us to the current political conjuncture where the inter-connections between the right/far-right and neo-liberalism have taken a new and dramatic turn and not only in the vote for Brexit and Trump's ascendancy to the US presidency. This can be seen with the rise of populist movements across Europe and authoritarian turns in (among others) the Philippines, Brazil and Turkey.

This is not the place for a full analysis of the resurgence of authoritarian populism (see Muller 2016) but a few observations can be noted, not least as they speak to the concerns of the articles that follow. First there is the question of the social basis of support for an

authoritarian turn and second is the nature of the political programmes. In terms of the first question, the issue of ‘white working class’ support for Trump should be treated with considerable caution (Davis 2017). Insofar as sections of workers supported Trump and had an impact on the election, it was significant above all in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, where a swing at the margins led to victory for Trump in all these states (McQuarrie 2016). But even these swings should be put into perspective. Although there was a 16 per cent national shift among poorer voters to Trump, in the Rustbelt 5 (Iowa, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Wisconsin) a 10.6 per cent point swing to Trump was significantly less than the 21.7 per cent swing away from the Democrats in the same states (Kilbarda and Roithmayr 2016). There is some evidence which suggests that Trump did well, not necessarily among lower income groups per se, but in areas where economic *anxiety* rather than income per se was particularly high, especially among those with low credit ratings, in counties where men have stopped working, where people had sub-prime loans before 2008, or where more residents received high disability payments. This then is a story less about income per se, and more about identifying areas where economic prospects have declined most steeply, and Trump’s support in these areas was significant (Casselman 2017). This also speaks to both the psychological and emotional pull of far-right rhetoric across distinctly vulnerable socio-economic layers and the moral-aesthetic dimensions of far-right appeals in a context of neoliberal anomie.

Perhaps related, Trump was far more successful in winning votes among those who had an unfavourable view of both candidates (Anderson 2017: 42). There is some parallel here with the Brexit vote, which again was won by votes among higher income groups but also where there were significant areas of working class support which reflected a negative solidarity, where there was limited expectation that Brexit or Trump will necessarily lead to social improvement, but rather that people have very little to lose in the first place, and if they

have to suffer, than so should everyone else (Davies 2016a). Significant here is levels of despair in the US, where from 1999 to 2013, in some locations there has been a rise in morbidity and mortality rates among white non-Hispanic middle aged men, linked to alcohol and narcotic abuse, and high rates of suicide (Case and Deaton 2015; 2017).

Trump's relationship with neoliberalism and the (Far) Right is also far from straightforward. In his campaign at least, he appeared to be closer to the paleo-conservative tradition in the US (Gottfried 2001; Scotchie 1999), which supports a shift (in theory) towards greater isolationism, promises on limits to free trade, and much more overt anti-immigration rhetoric, much of which challenges neoliberalism. Moreover, while the rise of populist politicians such as Trump owes something to the legacy of the culture wars launched by the New Right from the 1960s, equally it can be seen to be a reaction to neoliberal technocratic rationality, with the result that both liberal reason and neoliberal rationality are conflated and treated with equal contempt. Part of Trump's appeal is based on this rejection and what in effect amounts to the triumph of unreason (Davies 2016b).

Paleo-conservatives are particularly critical of what they call the managerial state (Gottfried 2001), but (in contrast to neoconservatives) what is distinctive about the paleo-conservative tradition is that it argues that managerialism persisted in the Reagan administration. In particular the neoconservative takeover in the 1980s meant that in effect conservatives were embracing liberal values and committing the United States to a global liberal empire. This persisted with the Democrat administrations that followed and the paleo-conservatives instead advocate isolationism, nativism and protectionism. In effect then this means that the managerial state in recent years has become even more distant from Americans, which is run by either liberal internationalists or neo-conservatives, both of which are in effect 'transnational post-Americans' (Francis 2016). This tradition also represents a highly racialised and masculinist conception on the American nation, which is nostalgic for a

parochial sense of home and the nation, in which identity was less politicised and white supremacy more secure, and the US was unquestionably the leading nation in the capitalist world. In effect then, this amounts to a critique of ‘globalisation’ from the Right and, potentially, a significant rupture with significant aspects of the the neoliberal order inaugurated in the early 1980s.

It was therefore not surprising that Trump enjoyed support among the so-called alt-right movement in the US, which – like Le Pen in France – has been critical of neoliberalism. But on the other hand, one prominent Silicon Valley entrepreneur, Peter Theil, was prominent in supporting Trump in the election, and here we can see some consistency with an authoritarian neoliberalism. Like Hayek, Theil (2009) argues that freedom and democracy are incompatible, and the former is more important than the latter, and there is “a need for entrepreneurs to escape...not via politics but beyond it” (Theil 2009). By 2011, he argued that there was a crisis in the US, and this presented an opportunity for renewed ‘creative destruction’. Unlike some other libertarians, Theil argues that government should support private interests but carry out high levels of research and development spending, through which individual entrepreneurs can then accrue significant rewards (as was the case with the Internet, as we have seen). In this way, the private sphere can essentially benefit from appropriate state spending. But at the same time as there should be massive state spending on research and infrastructure (as Trump proposes), there also needs to be tax cuts. Following the claims made for the Laffer Curve, this will lead to such high rates of economic activity that tax revenue can remain high – except of course it did not in the 1980s, and infrastructure spending is likely to be based on a public-private partnership and will be lucrative for the private sector and will come at the expense of the public sector. But this also suggests the need for a strong state, and an authoritarian leader, who can limit the politicised expectations and demands of the population as a whole.

And once in power, Trump appears to have shifted even more towards an authoritarian neoliberalism, and indeed even an increasingly neoconservative foreign policy, much to the consternation of some prominent alt-right agitators. This included a variety of appointments straight from ‘the swamp’, proposed repeals of (limited) controls on finance, a toning down of anti-free trade and anti-China rhetoric, increased use of military force in the Middle East and the threat of force against North Korea, and (at the time of writing) an apparent marginalisation of Steve Bannon’s America First strategy, much to the delight of neo-conservative intellectuals, and indeed a good deal of liberal internationalist commentators.

The Brexit vote is much harder to pin down, not least because – as the articles that follow suggest – the EU is in many respects an increasingly neoliberal institution, as is clear from the limits placed on governments by state aid rules, the Growth and Stability Pact and the disciplinary effect of the Euro on some countries. But in some respects this is precisely the problem for at least one strand of anti-Brexit sentiment, for as the articles that follow argue, while neoliberals need the state, they are also highly critical of it. The likes of the Conservative Free Enterprise Group, Economists for Brexit, the Adam Smith Institute, as well as Boris Johnson, Michael Gove and the Leave directors Dominic Cummings and Matthew Elliott, and former Cameron adviser Steve Hilton (d’Ancona 2016), are all critical of the bureaucracy emanating from Brussels, and they believe that the bureaucratic structure in Brussels is not conducive to the promotion of the ‘free market’. Thus, for Dominic Cummings (2013), there is little patience with negotiations and rules, because there is “too much trust in people and institutions that are not fit to control so much.” Like those neoliberals who opposed the 2008 bail-outs, this is a position which advocates creative destruction and spontaneous order, and there is little focus on questions of order and social stability (Finlayson 2016).

Leaving the EU thus presents the possibility of freedom, the market and spontaneity, which has so far been unfulfilled. That Brexit will present an enormous range of difficulties, such as what (bureaucratic) rules will be instigated in the name of Brexit, particularly in a context where 60 per cent of world trade is intra-firm and rests on standardisation of rules between different countries. One likely outcome of Brexit then is an enormous proliferation of transaction costs, and thus bureaucracy, in the name of free trade. The creative destruction solution to these problems rests precisely on the kind of a-social, methodologically individualist promise of neoliberalism which is a fantasy, because neoliberalism and the supposed rule of the market rests on all kinds of extra-market mechanisms, and while these might periodically be experienced as bureaucratic restrictions by individual companies, they are also necessary for these companies to exist in the first place.

But it is precisely this fantasy which links Brexit and Trump, because the latter in effect proposes an authoritarian ‘solution’ to the crisis of democracy, in which a decisionist leader requires validation only from public acclaim to act. While this might sound like a politicisation of civil society, and thus contrary to neoliberalism, it actually closely parallels the authoritarian liberal arguments of the ordo-liberals, and in this way Trump can be seen as a figure whose self-portrayal is compatible with the Schumpeterian heroic entrepreneur in the economic sphere, and the exceptional Schmittian figure in the political sphere, which is in some respects the logical culmination of neoliberalism. Trump, as the CEO of ‘America Inc’ has promised to run the country as he runs his business and seen in this way, it is the culmination of the (utopian) project of neoliberalism, namely the marketization of society. Seen in this way, Trump is an authoritarian but not a fascist. His administration has not taken over the state or even – despite its undoubted authoritarianism – attempted to do so. Indeed, for all of Trump’s condemnation of Democrat obstructionism, the administration has been slow to nominate people into prominent positions within the state. Trump has highly

orchestrated rallies but not a mass movement or paramilitary organisation. His right-wing authoritarianism in part comes from those around him, but also from his own distinctive position. Schmittian exceptionalism in the 1930s was based on the need for a strong leader to deal with a weak Weimar state captured by particular interests, not least Communists and the left. The rise of Trump has some parallels here but there is something distinctive about his exceptionalism which distinguishes him from the Nazis, and indeed the Italian fascists before him. While Italian and German fascists captured the state to deal with weak, corrupt liberal democracy, Trump in effect aims to by-pass these institutions, *in the name of national competitiveness*. In other words his authoritarianism is in fact rooted in the fact that he wants to run the United States as if it was a company, and this leads to impatience with the democratic process and the bureaucratic state (and in this regard there is a strong overlap with right-wing libertarian arguments around Brexit).

The question, politically, going forward is what happens – as looks likely in both the UK and the US – when the right-wing and nationalist dimensions of each political rupture are unfulfilled or disappoint some of the key social layers behind each. Thus, the racism and re-assertion of a politics of ‘white supremacy’ that has been unleashed looks likely to be unfulfilled in terms of the fundamental workings of the political economy and the complexion of society within the political projects of ‘Trumpism’ and Brexit. The issue, then, is preparing for what might come down the line thereafter.

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